

In Sickness and In Heath by Kiku_Takamoto

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Summary:

Steve anxiously awaits his HIV test results after being notified due to blood transfusion he received. It doesn't help that he and Billy develop mysterious flu-like symptoms.

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“One moment, Mr. Harrington, Dr. Harris will be right in to share your test results,” A nurse explained in her calm gentle voice. Steve could only muster a nod back, he was so scared he couldn’t speak.

Why was Steve at the doctor’s office? First, it began just like any regular-looking flu, chills, sweats, aches, headache, the whole nine yards. Nothing unusual at all. That is until a letter came in the mail for him.

The words read *“Mr. Harrington, we are contacting you to inform you of surgical procedure you had done in Rome, Italy, may have used blood that contained HIV antibodies. As a precaution, we ask that you please contact your local hospital clinic to perform HIV blood tests that may have passed into your body ”*. Steve was shocked by the letter he dropped his morning mug and coffee onto the ground. Billy had overheard everything

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“Pretty Boy? What the hell is- Steve?” Billy had a towel around his waist from his morning shower that he promptly abandoned after hearing something shatter in the kitchen. Despite the soap studs still in his hair, it was Steve’s frozen trance at the paper in his hand that concerned Billy the most, ‘Steve, what’s wrong?’

Steve said nothing. He barely managed to give Billy the notice, Billy felt looked at the content in shock before gently placing it on the counter, leading Steve away for the broken glass on the floor.

‘Well ... Harrington, this doesn’t mean anything. It’s just a precaution-“

“What if I have it though? T-That means you could be infected! That means I could be killing you slowly-“

“Hold the fuck up,’ Billy forced Steve to look at him, ‘You will get that test, and everything will be fine.”

“I should have never had that surgery!” Steve shouted, almost in the midst of a breakdown. Billy all but shook Steve.

“You had infected tonsils! You had to get surgery, flying back home wasn't exactly an option!”

This did nothing to snap Steve out of his panicked state, “God my life is over, if work hears about this I will lose my job, then my health insurance, then-“

"Harrington!" It was then Steve stopped, slowly catching his breath again. Billy hugged Steve tightly not caring if he was soaking his partner with his wet body. Steve didn't pull away.

“Everything going to be ok, alright? I'll even get it done to be 100% sure, ok?”

Not even a few days later Steve began to have flu-like symptoms, he didn't care if he had his tonsils out 6 months ago, this was too scary to him. His anxiety grew, even more, when he discovered how long he had to wait for test results. It was so bad Billy contacted all his ex's to see if any of them had HIV, he didn't care how long ago it was, any risk was too great for him to ignore ... two of them confirmed they were positive. All they could do was wait for results.

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Earlier that morning Billy had called out of work because he too started to feel flu-like symptoms that he couldn't explain.

"If I had AIDS and gave it to Billy, I might as well have killed him," Steve pleaded with whoever was listening to him for negative results. He could deal with the possibility of dying but being responsible for someone else's death? Not even death could ever melt his guilt.

Steve's attention snapped back as the doctor came into the room.

"Hello, Mr. Harrington. I have your results right there. I have some good news and bad news," The young doctor calmly explained.

"Oh god, oh god, oh god," Steve braced himself for his death sentence. Instead, what he saw was the doctor giving him a smile.

"The good news is you tested negative for any HIV antibodies," She confirmed, showing him his results. Steve felt himself almost blank out, he looked back and forth at the paper and at the doctor.

"Wait, I don't have HIV? Or AIDS?"

"No, Mr. Harrington," She confirmed again, she then handed the second page of results, "The bad news however does explain your symptoms, chills, swollen lymph nodes, fever, headache. Your blood tests went through a monospot, you have mono."

Steve felt his eyes bug out, "Mono? The kissing illness?"

Flashbacks of last week's night at the club ran into his mind. He and Billy were at a regular club due to it offering happy hour drinks, but after a stressful day, Billy had gotten carried away. One of these carried away moments was kissing a girl at a kissing booth that was held in the bar that night to celebrate Valentine's day a week early.

Steve had felt bad for getting so angry at Billy that night (plus he

may or may have not made extra loud noise the next morning just to create a heavier headache for Billy), but any guilt he felt was now gone in an instant. He was panicked for over a week all because of a kissing booth?

“Yes, mono can have symptoms that copy and mimic that of early HIV, but in comparison, it's completely harmless. Your case is a little severe, so I will prescribe some anti-inflammatories but within 2 to 4 weeks you should feel fairly normal again, maybe a bit fatigue but that will go away too,” Steve smiled a little too enthusiastically as the doctor filled a prescription.

“I see ... doctor can I make a quick phone call?”

The doctor nodded, she knew what look Steve was giving.

“Oh, of course, I will be right back with your release forms,” with that, she left the room to give Steve some privacy. Steve dialed his home number, waiting anxiously for Billy to pick up. He wasn't disappointed.

A groggily sniffly noise met his ears, “Hello, who-“

“WILLIAM HARGROVE!” Steve all but yelled angrily into the phone, he was mad, he didn't care when he heard the pathetic groan on the other side.

“Shit! What the fuck, Steve? I have a headache worse than any hangover I've ever had-”

“You gave this to me! I told you getting a drunk kiss from that kissing booth was a dumb idea!” Steve could almost picture Billy's dumbfounded facial expression.

“ Wait, you got AIDs from kissing?”

Steve faced palmed himself, “I don’t have HIV, Hargrove. But I do have mono! And it’s your damn fault!”

It was then Billy knew he screwed up, “Oh shit ...”

“You can sleep on the damn couch tonight, Hargrove!”

Billy scuffed dryly, “I don’t think so, Pretty Boy. My body aches and I feel cold all the damn time- oh ... oh shit, it is my fault-“

If his head wasn’t killing him, Steve would have rolled his eyes.

“Oh, forget it, I’ll sleep on the couch-“

“Fine, I’ll follow you and your mono ass on that thrifted couch,” Billy promised.

“Why do I love you?”

“Because I treat you real good, sweetheart,’ Billy tried flirting smoothly, but his sudden phlegm-filled coughing spell made Steve scrunched his face in disgust instead of embarrassment at the failed flirting attempt. After a few seconds Billy finally stopped, clearing his throat, ‘But listen just get the meds, my doctor is calling tomorrow. After that, we can both be sick miserable amigos together.”

“Fine but no beer,” Steve sniffled back, with his anxiety melting he could feel his symptoms hit him hard.

Billy didn’t get the hint, “But beer makes everything better-“

“You’re impossible,” Steve sighed, all he really wanted was to crawl in bed with Billy and their two fat fluffy cats.

Billy laughed back, “Love you too, Stevie. Stevie?”

“Yeah?”

“I’m glad everything is ok,’ Billy reaffirmed seriously, then his usual self switched back, ‘but I swear to god, if you ever develop AIDS and die, I will kill you.”

Steve grinned ear to ear, “Right back at you.”

A few days later Billy was too confirmed to be negative. Suddenly both could breathe with ease, it was a scary time, but it was one battle they wouldn’t have to fight. Even if they ever did, they knew full well they wouldn’t have to fight alone.

Author's Note:

HIV in the 80's was very scary but also very misinformed. Even to this day people believe you can get HIV or AIDS from doing the following with HIV positive person: breathing the same air, touching, swimming, bathing, sharing silverware, sharing toilets, sharing gym equipment or kissing (which is why Billy asked about kissing).

Gay and bisexual men were specifically blamed and targeted for the epidemic in the 80's, and not only dealt with homophobia and the effects from the disease (or even in worse scenario death), but also were at risk of losing their jobs, health insurance, housing and even family/friends.

Please break misinformation whenever you can ♥️📖